

British Company or Squadron Group

In the Hasty Attack

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The diversified missions the U.S. Army is performing around the world today reflect the role it is likely to continue to play as we enter the next century. Operations other than war, joint peace-keeping efforts, and coalition operations such as DESERT STORM demand that commanders and leaders at all levels have a better understanding of our prospective allies' training and tactics. The purpose of this article is to discuss the equipment and doctrinal aspects of a hasty attack, as it would be conducted by a British company or squadron group.

A British Army battlegroup is a combined arms force grouped, or organized, around the headquarters of an armored infantry or armored battalion. An armored infantry battlegroup conducts an advance (or movement) to contact with either an armored infantry company or an armored squadron (company equivalent) leading, depending upon the tactical situation.

When contact is made with the enemy and that contact warrants a hasty attack, British Army Field Manual, *Battlegroup Tactics*, calls for the attack to be conducted by the company or squadron group rather than by the battlegroup. Exercises conducted at the British Army Training Unit in Canada provide valuable lessons that are incorporated into the tactics, techniques, and procedures of armored and armored infantry battlegroups.

The battlegroup organizes for combat with two company or squadron groups composed of an armor squadron and an armored infantry company. The battlegroup commander commands these groups, but each group is controlled by the commander whose force is leading it. For example, during an advance to con-

tact with tanks leading, the squadron commander controls the group until the infantry moves into the assault, at which time control passes to the infantry company commander. While most U.S. leaders would be apprehensive about this system, the British find that it works for them.

Organization

The British armored squadron or company consists of a squadron headquarters of three tanks—one each for the commander, the second in command (2IC), and a troop sergeant (master gunner)—and three troops (platoons) of three tanks each. During an advance to contact, the squadron normally operates as a squadron (minus) with one troop grouped (task organized) with the leading infantry company. This platoon serves as the intimate support (IS) tank platoon. Once operations begin, the grouping is not likely to change. Although it is accepted that infantry and tank platoons may operate outside their normal company command for specific tasks, British doctrine considers this the exception rather than the rule.

The armored infantry company is organized with a company headquarters and three rifle platoons. The company commander (a major, hereafter referred to as the OC) and his 2IC ride in Warriors—British infantry fighting vehicles—configured as command vehicles. Each company is authorized a second captain, or Warrior captain, who rides in the OC's vehicle as the gunner. With this arrangement, the Warrior captain stays oriented to the ground and the tactical situation. This enables him to maintain control over the company's Warriors in the event the OC dismounts.

Each rifle platoon has four Warriors, one for the platoon commander and his headquarters element and one for each of his three sections (squads). In addition to the normal platoon sergeant, each platoon is authorized a second sergeant, or Warrior sergeant. The Warrior sergeant, the dedicated commander of a section vehicle, assumes control of the platoon's Warriors when the platoon commander dismounts. The platoon sergeant, unlike his American counterpart, rides in the rear of the platoon commander's vehicle and dismounts when the platoon dismounts.

Each infantry section consists of 10 men: a three-man crew that remains with the vehicle and a seven-man dismount element. When the infantry dismounts, a deputy vehicle commander assumes control of the vehicle and takes commands from the Warrior sergeant. The vehicle's gunner, who is trained in that position, remains in the gunner's seat throughout the operation.

A Milan antitank guided missile section from the battalion's ATGW (our ATGM) platoon may be grouped with the infantry company. The section, consisting of two Milan systems, moves in FV432s (vehicles similar to the M113 armored personnel carrier), which cannot keep pace with the Warrior. This lack of mobility, coupled with the Milan's 2,000-meter range and long time of flight, makes it a difficult system to employ. When a replacement for Milan is fielded, it will be pintle-mounted on the antitank platoon's Warriors.

Warrior Characteristics

The Warrior is designed to carry a 10-man section with full equipment. Although space in the troop compartment

is limited, the Warrior has more storage space than the Bradley; less ammunition storage is required because the Warrior does not have port firing weapons or a TOW missile equivalent.

The vehicle is fast and agile, reaching speeds of 48 miles per hour with an operating radius of 500 kilometers. The Warrior has a high-performance suspension system and low ground pressure, which—combined with its speed—enable it to keep pace with the Challenger, the British main battle tank.

The Warrior's main armament is the 30mm Rarden cannon, which fires armor-piercing discarding sabot (APDS) and high explosive (HE) rounds. It has a maximum range of 2,000 meters and can defeat lightly armored vehicles. The Warrior also mounts a 7.62mm coaxial chain gun similar to the general purpose machinegun (GPMG), the British equivalent to the U.S. M60. Both weapons can also engage helicopters. The vehicle commander and the gunner have image intensification, combined day and night sights.

The vehicle's hull provides protection from air and ground burst 155mm shells at 10 meters and against armor-piercing rounds up to 14.5mm. The internal sides and rear have anti-spall linings, and the vehicle is fitted with an over-pressure system.

Conduct of the Hasty Attack

A successful hasty attack seeks to combine the Warrior's shock effect and maneuverability with rehearsed drills and procedures to assault the enemy and fight through the objective. To avoid further confusion, the OC and the squadron commander must have a simple plan, and they must have sufficient and accurate information about the enemy and the objective.

The conduct of the hasty attack is best explained through the five parts described in *Battlegroup Tactics*:

Deployment. When the battlegroup close reconnaissance element (scout platoon) directs the company squadron group to conduct the hasty attack, the armored infantry company and the armored squadron move to a rendezvous and then to the "forming up" point (FUP),

which is similar in purpose to a U.S. assault position. In the FUP, the company or squadron group finalizes plans for the attack and makes any required organizational adjustments. The company or squadron group spends as little time as possible in the FUP, passing through it to move into assault formations, if drills and procedures have been sufficiently rehearsed.

One platoon of tanks establishes the fire support group (FSG), usually off to a flank, under the command of the squadron 2IC. Any Milan sections not moving with the assaulting infantry company also move to the FSG. The FSG must win the fire fight, assisted by any indirect fire support, and increase the level of fire to cover the assault forces as they move toward the objective. A forward observation officer or a mortar fire controller coordinates the indirect fires.

Assault and Break-in. The infantry normally deploys with two platoons on line, behind the assault tanks and the IS tanks. With two platoons on line, the OC maximizes his firepower forward to provide suppression on the objective during the dismount. The third platoon normally remains one tactical bound behind the company as the reserve. The tanks provide the initial shock action as the assault force moves from the FUP. The assault tanks then seal off the objective from any counterattacking force, moving to the flank opposite the FSG.

From the FUP departure up to this point, the hasty attack has been controlled by the squadron commander, who moves with the assault tanks. As the tanks move off from the front of the objective, the infantry company continues to follow the IS tanks, and the OC takes control of the battle. He controls the IS tanks, which are guided to the objective by the FSG. The assault tanks and the FSG continue to provide the support for the break-in and the fight-through under the control of the OC.

Depending upon the enemy's strength and disposition on the objective, the IS tanks lead the assaulting infantry onto and through the objective. If the enemy's strength or obstacles prohibit the tanks from moving onto the objective, the tanks provide suppressive fire while the infantry dismounts.

ARMORED INFANTRY COMPANY (6 Officers/120 Enlisted)

Company HQ (3/15)

Major	Officer Commanding
Captain	Company Second Captain
Cpt/Lt	Company 2IC
WO2	Company Sergeant Major (1SG)
Color SGT	Company QM Sgt (Supply Sgt)
SGT	Tech Sgt (Motor Sgt)
CPL (x3)	Signal Cpl, Supply Cpl, Maint Cpl
L/CPL (x4)	Supply Clk, Clk, Dvr, Veh Gunner
Private (x5)	Radioman, Dvr (x3), Veh Gunner

ARMORED INFANTRY PLATOON (1/35)

Platoon HQ (1/5)

Subaltern	Platoon Commander
SGT (x2)	2IC (Plt Sgt), Second (Warrior) Sgt
Private (x3)	Dvr, Vehicle Gunner, Radioman

SECTION (0/10)

CPL	Section Commander
L/CPL (x2)	2IC, Dep Vehicle Commander
Private (x2)	Light Support Weapon (SAW)
Private (x3)	Riflemen
Private	Vehicle Gunner
Private	Driver

The infantrymen dismount at a point and time usually selected by the OC. They do not dismount until enemy action requires them to do so, but the dismount point is preferably in dead ground. As they dismount, the Warrior crews and the IS tanks continue to provide fire support. If these tanks move with the dismounted infantry through the objective, the infantry follows, communicating over the external telephone.

Fight-Through. After the infantry has dismounted, the Warriors have five options. In each, the Warrior sergeant controls his platoon's "Bravo" Warriors, the designation given to the Warriors when the infantry has dismounted. The actual support from the Bravo Warriors, operating in platoon groups, is coordinated at company level by the OC or, if the OC has dismounted, by the 2IC. The following are the five options:

Envelopment—The Bravo Warriors of the assaulting platoons move to either flank of the objective to support their respective platoons. This is likely to mask

the fires of the FSG and possibly of the assault tanks. It also carries a significant risk of the vehicles firing in on each other.

Flank support scenario—The Bravo Warriors move to a single flank, one platoon at a time. If the third platoon has remained one bound behind as a reserve, this may be a likely time for it to be committed with the FSG tanks. The Warriors must take care that they do not move forward and outpace their infantrymen and possibly fire on them.

Stand-off positions—If it is not feasible to take up positions on either flank, the Bravo Warriors may take up hull-down positions and concentrate their fire on enemy fighting vehicles. Any other type of suppressive fire may be too difficult to coordinate with the dismounted infantry.

Intimate support—If the situation on the objective allows it, Bravo Warriors can move onto the objective under the control of the Warrior sergeants. This allows them to provide close support to their sec-

tions. The Warriors can also provide the same support to both platoons under the command of the Warrior captain.

Combination—Any or all of the options can be used in combination, but this requires well-rehearsed drills and considerable practice.

Reorganization. This part of the hasty attack is normally carried out in accordance with drills and procedures. The infantrymen clear the objective (bunkers and trenches) in detail. They must also have a plan to bring the infantry back together with their vehicles and to cross-level ammunition, weapons, leaders, and individual soldiers.

Exploitation. The tactical situation and the brigade commander's plan dictate whether exploitation or consolidation will take place. If the battlegroup is to exploit a successful attack, the infantry company follows the assault tanks and the FSG tanks in the exploitation.

Armored infantry battlegroups conduct

hasty attacks to seize ground or destroy enemy forces in hastily prepared positions, trading preparation time for maintaining momentum. The company or squadron group makes maximum use of shock effect through the firepower and maneuverability of the Warrior and the tanks supported by indirect fire. Success in the hasty attack depends upon accurate information and a simple plan aggressively executed through drills and procedures. The more familiar the commanders are with each other, the more effective the command and control procedures will be.

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Action on the Jamestown Line

Close Combat in the Korean War

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article was originally a letter that I wrote in February 1952 to the previous commander of Company K, 7th Cavalry, Captain John R. Flynn, about what had happened to the company since he left, wounded, in June 1951. I had forgotten about the letter until he returned it to me at the 7th Cavalry's 1995 reunion in Washington.

When I began writing the letter, I was on a boat just out of Otaru, Japan, and on my way home, after 16 months in the regiment. I had served as a rifle platoon leader and (still a lieutenant) as commander of Company K. I was then assigned to the regimental S-3 shop, where I was able to refresh my memory on the details of the extreme combat the com-

pany had engaged in during September and October 1951. As a result, I was confident that the letter was as accurate as I could make it.

As a young officer, I profited from reading reports of small-unit combat actions, and I trust that young officers today will profit from reading of these actions in Korea, more than 46 years ago.

There is a lot to say in bringing you up to date since you left. Here beside me I have several false starts on letters to you, but they were inadequate and out of perspective. So I will not say I'm sorry I did

not mail a letter sooner, for I am glad I held off until this day, when I am sure and unhurried and can write one letter for 15 days with no place to mail it, and can now speak from more authority and ex-

perience. I changed jobs at a lucky time. In the S-3 shop, I was in on the post-battle discussions and writings of the Regiment, and talked with the generals and the staffs, and wrote and read. So now I can say